Training For Maneuver

by Captain Robert Bateman

Maneuver warfare: A controversial term, continually redefined and argued about, but generally agreed to be "a good thing." Involves concepts like speed vs. synchronization and "ordinary" forces used in conjunction with "extraordinary" forces.[1] Generally cited, but rarely practiced in peacetime, paid some service in most U.S. Army doctrine, espouses the training of officers in "operational art," but claims applicability to all echelons of warfare. Embraced by the United States Marine Corps as doctrine,[2] has components which are elements of U.S. Army doctrine.

This is a "Perfect World" article. Upfront, it should be stated and acknowledged that the number one skill which our tactical echelons must perfect is how to ***DESTROY*** *the enemy. Execution of violence is the enabling skill which frees forces to maneuver in most situations. It is the basic skill without which the author readily concedes that maneuver cannot happen. That said, given the time and money, the material and the men...*

How do we train this generation of officers to execute maneuver warfare? Does the United States Army *de facto* embrace the concept of maneuver warfare as opposed to attrition warfare? Do we even acknowledge the possibility that the two might exist as separate entities, and should we? And what the heck is "maneuver warfare?" We all can infer what attrition warfare might be — images of the stagnation on the Western Front in WWI abound — but that's not how **we** fight, is it? These are the questions that today's senior leaders and doctrinal writers face, and which this essay plans to address.

Simply stated, "maneuver warfare" is the embodiment of Sun Tzu's paraphrased maxim that the essence of generalship is not to win the war by winning a thousand battles, but to win the war having never had to fight a battle.[3] Through movement and positioning, put your opponent into a position where he must cede what you desire, without firing a shot. This does not negate the role of the direct fire fight in **tactical** operations, but it does minimize the casualties taken by most tactical commanders and maximizes the options available to the **operational** level commander.

And so the question becomes, how do we train the current and successive generations of officers to conduct warfare that emphasizes avoidance of contact at any level in favor of positioning? And, at what level must we concentrate our efforts? Training second lieutenants in the planning and execution of the direct fire fight is, in all cases, a requirement. Training captains in the use of fire and movement to impose their will through an operation upon the enemy is also a necessary goal. But how do we train our staffs and the commanders that own staffs? These staffs start at the battalion and brigade, senior first lieutenants, captains and majors, as well as the lieutenant colonels and colonels in command. Where do they learn the beginnings of operational art, and the possibilities, as well as the risks, inherent in maneuver-style warfare? In what forum are their ideas validated?

Battalions and brigades participate in the Battle Command Training Program (BCTP), utilizing the Corps Battle Simulation (CBS) computer simulation, but at that level, they are more training aids than anything else. During training events of this size, battalion and brigade staffs generally do not even attend the training seminars or after-action review discussions. Where are lower echelon (tactical) headquarters trained for maneuver warfare and their creative and inspired innovations on the art of war tested? Sadly, for the United States Army, the answer would have to be that this last goal is not being met; it is not even being pursued. We are just not prepared, or currently equipped, to execute this type of training at the tactical level, and one could even argue that this is true for the operational level also, in light of the built-in limitations of the current generation of computer simulations.

We have thus far refused to train maneuver warfare-based tactics at our home stations or at the combat training centers. For maneuver training of tactical units, the question is, are we training tactical units to attack at unexpected times, using unexpected directions, or attacking dissimilar forces? No. These deficiencies might be corrected at our training centers in the future.

Our combat training centers (CTC), the Combat Maneuver Training Center (CMTC) at Hohenfels in Germany, the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) at Fort Polk, La., and the National Training Center (NTC) at Fort Irwin, in the Mojave Desert of California, are not doctrinally or physically equipped to replicate anything but attrition warfare. Think back, those of you that have been to these training sites. When was the last time that you even heard of a battalion or brigade commander attacking 12 or 24 or 36 hours early and catching the Opposing Forces (OPFOR) before they were ready? "Never" will likely be your answer, and we've all served for commanders that we **knew** had the initiative to do so, were they not constrained by the system. Can anyone remember a mission, say for example a deliberate attack by a task force (TF), that had a no-later-than (NLT) tirne? In other words, where the commander was given the freedom to attack when he saw the conditions for success were set? "No," again. Or, how about the objective? Invariably we set out to destroy the enemy's main body. Why not attack his field trains and rear areas, his logistical underbelly? Or specifically target his air defense for ground attack from our infantry so that we might punch through with attack helicopters? Or attack his artillery with our infantry? The answer is because some elements of the OPFOR are not "in play."

We have established training centers which do a terrific job of training second lieutenants to fight a platoon and live in the field, and captains how to command their companies in the swirling maelstrom of a TF fight. Our training centers, better than any other military in the world, replicate the "friction" and the "fog of war."[4] But, do they train initiative and audacity in commanders? Do they reward the innovative commander? We know that these centers reward the lethal commander, but can they be structured to create benefits for the commander that wins via another route? The commander who, through the use of maneuver, renders his opponent's actions

irrelevant? The answers to these questions are unfortunately a resounding "No." OK, then, why are we not training as we say that we will fight? After all, ask any company grade or field grade officer, "Would you prefer to attack into the enemy flank or soft spot, or would you like to attack into the teeth of his defense?" The answer you will get is, "Into the flank, of course, you fool." Then ask, "OK, have you ever trained that? Would you recognize the opportunity? Have you ever attacked on your own initiative when you saw the enemy wasn't ready for you? Have you ever trained to pursue? Or do you regularly stop on the far side of the objective and wait for ENDEX?" You will not find many who can answer these questions in the affirmative. Pursuit, for example, is historically one of the most difficult missions to accomplish, yet it is never trained. What changes must be effected in these areas to correct our current training deficiencies?

How We Train

Among the three training areas noted above, the National Training Center at Fort Irwin is the largest and most complex CTC operated by the U.S. Army. Its state-of-the-art simulation devices, massive live-fire complex, and professional observer controller (O/C) teams train tens of thousands of soldiers every year. But what does it train those combat, combat support (CS), and combat service support (CSS) soldiers to do and expect, when and if they ever face true warfare?

To begin with, the NTC trains the combat soldiers and officers to seek the enemy, to destroy the enemy through direct and indirect fires, and to face the full brunt of his strength with all of our strength in a titanic struggle to determine the strongest and most efficient. The mission might be a meeting engagement, deliberate attack, or deliberate defense; in all cases, the rotational maneuver battalions are given orders that dictate when and where they might attack, and, in a few instances, even how they must structure their attack. Orders are deliberately sent, from the notional 52nd Infantry Division, that determine exactly why and when the rotational unit may cross restrictive phase lines and limits of advance (LOAs). Unit boundaries, for the battalions and brigades, are inviolate, and it's a rare occasion when one unit's request for an adjustment is granted by the 52nd Division. These are inevitably due to notional division-level operations which the rotational unit supports. For example, the rotational units are locked into a 0600 attack on D-Day as the supporting effort to the divisional main effort. The main effort is an attack by the "other" brigade on their flank (notional). This occurs from the moment of their receipt of the OPORD on D-3 and is generally inviolate. In order to properly synchronize the division's notional maneuvers, the rotational units must attack at the proper time in the proper place.

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The "big picture" is used to restrict the rotational unit, never mind that a tactical breakthrough and attainment of the terrain desired might totally unhinge the OPFOR "division" and create greater opportunities for the 52nd Division. All is sacrificed in the name of synchronization. The maneuver training centers currently exist solely to train tactical units in the synchronization of their available combat power. The tactical unit that accomplishes this is more often successful in the firefights that occur at the preordained time. But no attention is given to other multipliers of combat force. For example, to borrow from LTC Robert Leonhard's book, *The Art of Maneuver*,[5] a simple physics equation provides a convenient method of understanding the dynamic of time when applied to combat power, F=MA. That is, Force (Combat Power) = Mass (Raw numbers of combat systems/ units) times Acceleration. Simply put, you can attack at H-Hour with four companies, and achieve less than if you had attacked at H-48 with two companies. This phenomena might be quantified as Mass of 2 (companies) x 48 (time factor, for this discussion 1=1) = relative combat power of 96, while 4x1 = relative combat power of 4.

This aspect of warfare requires training. Its component concepts are not inviolate doctrine. Yet the concept has been valid throughout the history of war. But we do not train units to recognize these situations when they arise. Instead, we wait, we mass, we synchronize. In the end, the result of this restriction is familiar and preordained: the rotational unit attacks directly into the teeth of a prepared defense, or defends against the entire OPFOR regiment at 95% strength. This is the epitome of attritional warfare, facing strength with strength in a stand-up fair fight.

As for the logistics and supporting branches of the Brigade Combat Team (BCT), they have a separate fight of their own. No, this is not an analogy referring to the "fight" to move assets, fix, fuel and arm the combat elements of the BCT. Though, were maneuver-based training instituted, this aspect of the training environment might take on an entirely new importance.

No, what is referred to here is that those soldiers and leaders in the brigade support areas and field trains of the BCT are often, quite literally, fighting an entirely different fight than those combat elements forward. They are daily shelled by long range artillery with devastating accuracy, hit with chemical attacks, and attacked from the air. All this despite the fact that there generally is not any OPFOR within kilometers of the BSA. They undergo these attacks to "validate" that they can in fact react to these challenges, no matter how well the combat units forward do in their destruction of the enemy infiltration efforts. Regardless of the tactical defeats which the OPFOR might suffer, and how well the BSA tenants might be dispersed and concealed, these continue. Why? Because these attacks are directed and initiated solely by the observer/controllers (O/Cs). They rarely have any relation whatsoever to the tactical play occurring between the combat units and the OPFOR at the FEBA. When a breakthrough of the main defensive belt does occur, the BSA is generally overrun, to be sure, but this is more of an afterthought by the OPFOR, and not their true tactical objective, as briefed by the S2s of the rotation, and the OPFOR themselves.

This occurs for two reasons; first, if the O/Cs don't do it, then the OPFOR likely will not commit assets to it

themselves; there is no payoff within the scenario. And second, to impose additional strain on the combat units forward as they lose logistic assets. Of the two, the first reason might seem the more puzzling. Why wouldn't the OPFOR attack the soft BSA units? For the same reason we are not allowed to attack their logistics: it would be too easy; it could destroy the rotation; and it's damned tough to do when the logistics assets do not have anything beyond individual MILES.

How does maneuver warfare get trained? At the current time, we do not train for this type of warfare. Maneuver, as defined by *FM 101-5-1, Operational Terms and Symbols* is, "The movement of forces supported by fire to achieve a position of advantage from which to destroy or threaten the destruction of the enemy."[6] This alone is a step in the correct direction, but it does not give the reader a true grasp of what maneuver-based tactical and operational level training and doctrine might create.

To truly train and inculcate today's leaders in maneuver-based warfare, we must create a training environment where maneuver is rewarded, and this requires some restructuring at our training centers and our home stations. This training, following doctrinal precepts, must include both realistic field training as well as computer-based simulation training. But, to conduct this training and change how we currently train, we need to examine just how we train for war now, and the nature of the schism which has appeared between our doctrinal concepts and our training realities.

Methods of Defeat

In today's attrition-oriented training arena, defeat at the tactical level invariably equals destruction of the enemy within the confines of the order — in other words, destruction of the whole enemy attack, or destruction of the enemy forces at the point of penetration, etc.

Nobody denies that tactical formations must have the ability and skill to synchronize their combat power. Attrition (i.e. the destruction of enemy ground maneuver combat forces) at the tactical level is a required skill which all tactical echelons must possess; it is a prerequisite to operational-level maneuver. However, little attention is given by the staffs of the maneuver units during their military decision-making process to interpretation of their basic mission. There is a mission (task and purpose), and a commander's intent (purpose, method, endstate), but the basic "why" of the whole operation is often forgotten in the mechanics of figuring out "how" to accomplish the task.

For training purposes, we are repeatedly given restrictive and specific missions. "Penetrate Obstacle X at PK 123456 and destroy all enemy direct-fire weapons which can influence the passage of lines of the follow-on forces through the breach." Or, "Defend in sector NLT 050600 DEC 95 from PL DOG to PL CAT allowing no penetration of PL PIG to support..." Darned little thought really goes into questioning that assigned mission to determine WHY we are defending here. Supposedly, we got that from the commander's intent, but the reality is somewhat different.

How do we defeat an enemy tactical formation? In three ways, by destruction, incapacitation, and irrelevance. First, if you manage to destroy the enemy, then obviously he cannot accomplish his mission and you win. It may well be a Phyrric victory ("One more such victory and we are lost."), and the massive casualties taken during the course of, and in the name of, training may dishearten your troops, but it will go in the training books as a "win."

Second, we may incapacitate the enemy so that he is unwilling or unable to execute a plan to force his will upon us. This incapacitation may be in the form of passive measures we take that would make an attack or defense by the enemy plainly a losing proposition. Or, it may be active measures, things like attacking the enemy's critical vulnerabilities which stop his current or projected operations. In mechanized warfare, fuel is the normal short-term show-stopper. No mechanized TF on earth can sustain heavy combat operations for better than 36 hours without resupply of fuel. For light forces, water or food are limiting factors, fuels for the human body.

Finally, we might make the enemy actions irrelevant. Abandon and target that hill mass dominating the main supply route (MSR) which we suspect is the objective of the forward detachment (FD) battalion. Pre-plan and open when required an alternate MSR which makes that previously critical portion of terrain just one more hill/pass/cut, etc. Allow the enemy to occupy the hill; keep him isolated and occupied in position; cut ***his*** supplies; watch him wither on the vine. These last two methods of defeat represent movement as the key combat component to the success of the mission. Neither positively requires a direct-fire engagement, and neither is currently practiced or replicated anywhere in our training system.

Opponents of maneuver theory might balk at the idea of bypassing enemy combat units, regardless of their size. However, this has historically been the most successful method of defeating enemy units. An examination of the 37th Armor Battalion and its rampage across France under the command of then-Lieutenant Colonel Creighton Abrams operating in Combat Command "A" of the 4th Armored Division in WWII, finds that the tip of the spear in that most successful of divisions regularly bypassed any prepared defensive position.[7] Attacking into the teeth of a prepared defense was anathema to their concept of maneuver. Yet their attacks unhinged entire German divisions during the summer of '44. Had Abrams waited to mass the combat power required, to synchronize to the degree expected at the National Training Center instead of using speed and terrain to bypass where possible, would Patton have been able to turn his Army northward, leading again with Abrams and the 37th, to relieve Bastogne that December? Our doctrine recognizes these forms of defeat in concept. Where we run into trouble is the reality of our training system, which does not accept "fear" or replicate logistics, or permit time to be the decisive factor for the "BLUEFOR."

One cannot inspire fear, or cause panic in surrounded units, during MILES training. Has anyone ever seen the OPFOR surrender in anything like the numbers that even the best of the Republican Guard Divisions surrendered? Of course not; the OPFOR (and our forces) cannot be scared, they will fight to the last man in training, and move until killed. If surrounded, they will attack; if isolated, they harass. Their sole (current) vulnerability is their logistics, for even the OPFOR cannot move without fuel. This is a greater vulnerability than we assign to the opponent forces in our computer simulations, who never suffer logistically and cannot run out of fuel, as fuel and ammunition are "magically" resupplied in all exercises, up to and including the CBS system used during BCTP. How then can we attack these softer targets, when they are not available to

attack? We must restructure the training system to replicate these aspects of warfare.

How We Might Train

Today, we are testing and validating the potential advantages of information-based warfare. Our force structure and weapons systems are coalescing around the concept of using information as a combat multiplier. Increased information availability and flow should allow our forces to maneuver more precisely and get inside the enemy's "Decision Cycle." These changes should amplify the potential effects of maneuver, as opposed to attrition, training. We will better "know" ourselves and our enemy, and be able to more accurately assess his strengths and the locations of his strength, as well as his weaknesses.

Near-perfect intelligence (a lofty goal, but one which we are striving to attain) may soon be available down to the battalion 1evel. What will we do with that knowledge? What changes should we incorporate today in our training centers and computer simulations to take advantage of these newfound abilities? Or will we continue fighting in the same old style, only now knowing better the firestorm into which we are throwing our forces in the name of "training."

Three changes in our system of training might start the ball rolling for a conceptual revolution in our methods of training for war.

The first change would be at our combat training centers, NTC, CMTC and JRTC. This would be the introduction of true "free play" in the maneuver box. One caveat to the observations listed below is that the recent move in NTC towards "brigade ops" is a great step forward. This brings greater flexibility, at least potentially, to the subordinate battalions. Brigade boundaries may still be imposed by the 52nd ID, but how the battalions maneuver within those limits is now open to much more interpretation. The forward thinkers at the NTC who implemented this change deserve congratulations.

However, true "free play" remains a goal. To implement this change would be costly, as it requires the OPFOR maneuver elements and their logistic support elements to enter and remain in the maneuver box at all times. One foreseen future critical vulnerability of the BLUEFOR will be the addition of the M109A6 Paladin to the maneuver box as a maneuver element. Utilizing the greatly increased dispersion and movement abilities of the Paladin will likely mean that these systems will move in smaller groups, if not semi-autonomously. This greatly increases their survivability against indirect counterbattery fire, yet now makes them a high payoff target for the OPFOR in the direct fire fight. If we are going to place the BLUEFOR artillery into the maneuver box, we should do something similar to the OPFOR, creating a vulnerability of theirs that we might aim to exploit.

Ideas like this double, if not triple, the OPFOR PERSTEMPO, taking soldiers away from garrison and adding wear and tear to twice the number of vehicles as the current system. This implies either an increased budget and increased number of soldiers assigned to the OPFOR of the training centers, or a reduction in the number of rotations scheduled yearly. Painful choices indeed, which can be avoided, if we just keep training in the same old way. But the advantages might also be great. For the first time since inception, the OPFOR would have a critical vulnerability which it must protect. The OPFOR would also have to maintain contact, to guard against surprise attacks and build its intelligence picture. Their soldiers will become tired at night, opening the way for infiltrations which are nearly impossible against troops that rotate to the rear while contact is not imminent. They might be the ones paralyzed by deadlined vehicles and reduced fuel as it's their support elements attacked by our artillery. These are all realistic events not replicated today.

The second change should occur within our computer simulations, adding those same vulnerabilities and more. Commercially available computer simulations have been replicating logistics fatigue and the morale of units for over a decade. Yet, today our most sophisticated simulations allow friendly and enemy units to fight to the last pixel! Why, when we wargame against an enemy with a strong artillery force, must we focus on the destruction of the artillery systems themselves? We throw our deep attack assets against his artillery "center of gravity" and come away battered by the resultant losses to his air defense systems. Common sense tells us all that with huge artillery parks come even larger logistical tails feeding ammunition to the guns. These assets are rarely adequately defended by tactical air defense in our own Army, let alone in the other armies. Wouldn't silencing his guns be as effective as their destruction? Adding more realistic logistics simulation to the enemy forces in our wargames would acknowledge this, and create more opportunities for our planners.

Finally, we must reintroduce wargaming skills to our leaders. Often cited as "a lost art," wargaming skills are not emphasized to our junior leaders early enough. It is through constant wargaming, in a variety of environments and systems, that we might inculcate maneuver throughout our Army. There is no better teacher than experience, and wargaming at all echelons is a very cost-effective method of teaching. Wargaming means more than the deliberate process used during the military decision-making process to arrive at a recommended course of action for the commander; it should be trained constantly. Our lieutenants should train every week, using tactical decision games or commercial computer simulations on moving forces, comparing forces, creating deceptions, and exploiting weaknesses. The advantages of speed and intelligence to maneuver, as well as the technical aspects of creating an efficient engagement area can all be replicated in various commercially available computer simulations or board games. Through the constant use of these tools, the mental flexibility required by today's, and more especially tomorrow's, leaders might be increased and their personal information-processing speeds increased. We need fast, flexible leaders, and wargames are the most cost-efficient method to develop those leaders.

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Endstate

Today we fight toe-to-toe with the enemy when we train at the tactical level. This builds competence in our junior leaders, our sergeants, lieutenants, and captains. Our tactical units must have

the ability to synchronize their available combat power to utterly destroy enemy units that face them. The problem is that we train exclusively for this ability. At no tactical echelon does the United States Army currently reward all three of the potential advantages of maneuver as a mechanism for defeat of the enemy. We all accept that attacking the enemy in the flank is a good idea, yet we rarely practice this. Attacking the enemy before he is ready is another agreed upon goal. But there are few combat leaders that have ever been given the chance to attack when they saw the opportunity, and fewer still that have consciously trained to recognize that window of opportunity. Finally, hitting his logistics is universally identified as a primary means of slowing, stopping, or at least changing the enemy's plan. Yet nowhere do we actually train to attack his, or adequately attempt to protect ours.

To train in as identical a manner as we say we are going to fight requires change, and in this decade of change for the United States Army, these changes can't come soon enough.

Notes

[1]Sun Tzu, *The Art of War.*

[2]Fleet Marine Force Manual-1, March 1989.

[3]*Ibid*., Sun Tzu.

[4]Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. M. Howard and P. Paret [Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976].

[5]Leonhard, Robert, *The Art of Maneuver*, Presidio Press, 1991.

[6]*FM 101-5-1*, June 1993.

[7]Baldwin, Hanson, *Tiger Jack, The Life of "P" Wood*, Old Army Press, 1979.

Captain Robert L. Bateman is currently attending graduate school en route to the History Department at USMA. He previously served as commander, HHC/2-7, 1st Cavalry Division. He has served as BMO, 2-7 Cav, S3 (Air), and platoon leader 4-87 Inf (L). He is a graduate of the Infantry Officer Basic Course, Airborne, Air Assault, and Ranger Courses as well as the Armor Officer Advanced Course.